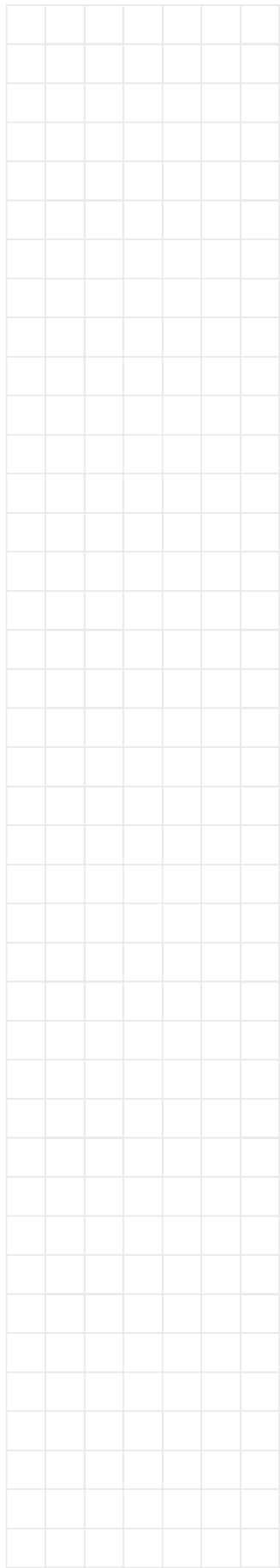
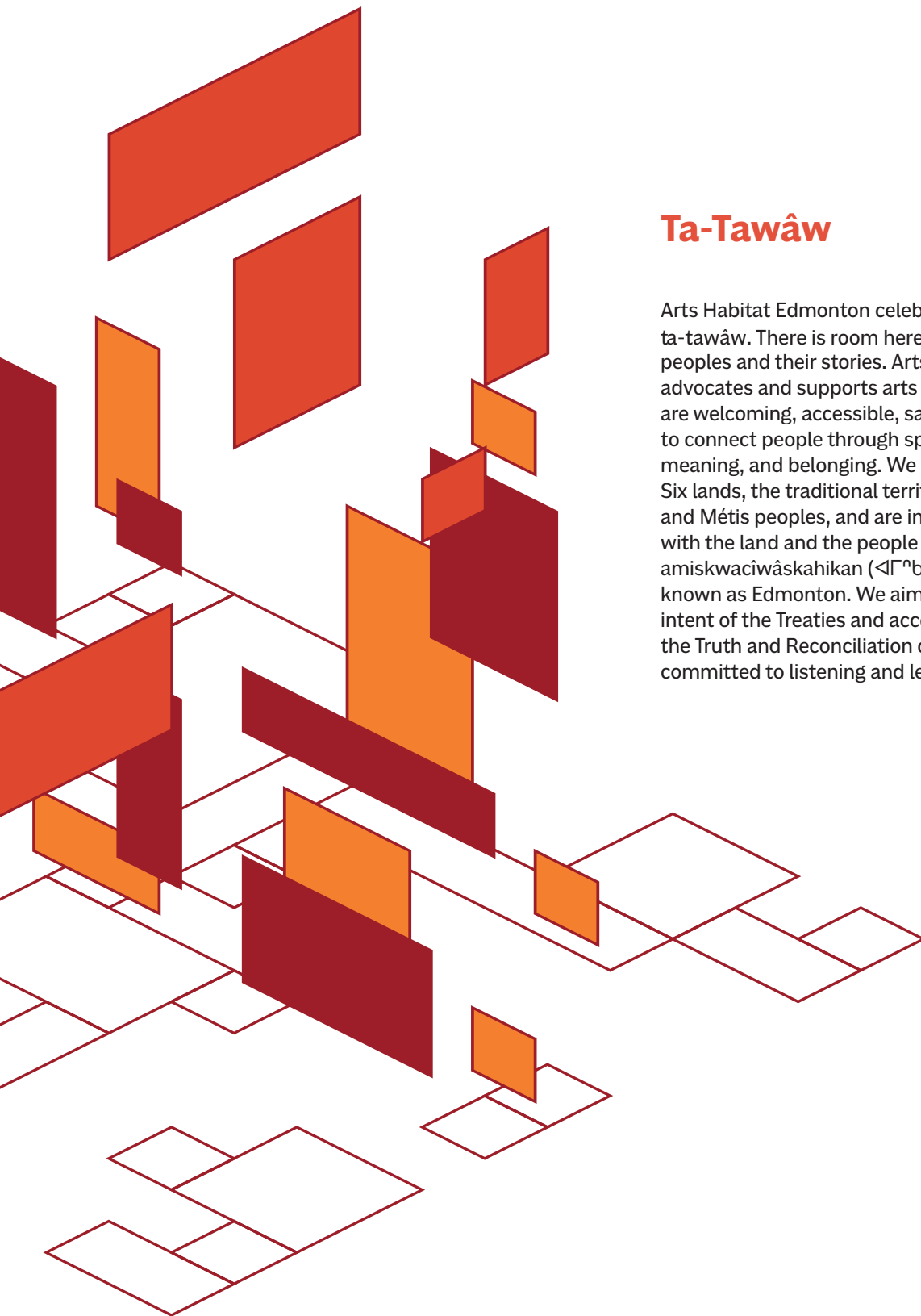


**2024**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**



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## Ta-Tawâw

Arts Habitat Edmonton celebrates the spirit of ta-tawâw. There is room here for everyone; for all peoples and their stories. Arts Habitat Edmonton advocates and supports arts and cultural spaces that are welcoming, accessible, safe, and respectful. We aim to connect people through space and foster connection, meaning, and belonging. We live and work on Treaty Six lands, the traditional territories of First Nations and Métis peoples, and are in a sacred relationship with the land and the people of this area known as amiskwaciwâskahikan (<math>\langle \Gamma^{\circ} b^{\wedge} \hat{\cdot} \langle \cdot^{\circ} b^{\circ} \Delta b^{\circ} \rangle</math>) colonially known as Edmonton. We aim to live by the original intent of the Treaties and accept responsibility to honour the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action. We are committed to listening and learning.



## Message From The Board

As we reflect on 2024, it has been a year of growth, creativity, and dedication to support Edmonton’s artistic community, and we are delighted to share our achievements at Arts Habitat Edmonton (AHE) with you.

The Board has been inspired by the vibrancy of the arts spaces we have helped co-create and nurture over the years. The opportunity to support artists through purpose-built spaces and to see the direct impact of our efforts has been immensely rewarding. As a Board, we are particularly excited about the growth of The Habitat with the success of new initiatives including the launch of ArtsHub Ortona and ArtsHub Creative Studios and we are thrilled to see talented local artists and non-for-profit organizations settling in and creating in these cultural hubs.

### Mandate and Strategic Plan Progress

AHE continues to champion Edmonton’s cultural infrastructure by advocating for new and improved arts spaces. Our work on the **Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan (ECIP)** advances the understanding and planning of critical spaces needed to support a thriving arts community.

We have also made significant strides on our **2024-2026 Strategic Plan** across our four pillars as Arts Space Planners, Operators, Advocates, and Trusted Advisors. Key milestones include:

- The successful launch of **ArtsHub Ortona** with 100% occupancy of short-term studio space and growing programming.
- The upcoming completion of **ArtsHub Creative Studios**, a new long-term rental space for artists, slated to open in early 2025.
- Our ongoing creative spaces at **ArtsHub I18** and **ArtsHub McLuhan House** where Arts Habitat fosters dynamic environments for collaboration and artistic growth.



### **Gratitude for Our Executive Director and Staff**

We credit the leadership of our Executive Director, Julian Mayne, whose dedication has been vital to the success of building cultural hubs in Edmonton. As we prepare for Julian's next adventure, we celebrate his achievements and recognize that his passion will be missed. We are working hard with Mullen Leadership to find the best candidate to continue the incredible work of building community.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to the amazing staff at AHE. Their hard work, creativity, and commitment to our mission have been indispensable in bringing our strategic initiatives to life and supporting artists in our community. We are grateful for their unwavering dedication.

### **Looking Ahead**

In 2025, we remain focused on expanding Edmonton's arts and cultural infrastructure with creative spaces and ongoing community engagement. Together, we will continue to refine and enhance the work of AHE to build a thriving cultural city and strengthen the future prosperity of Edmonton.

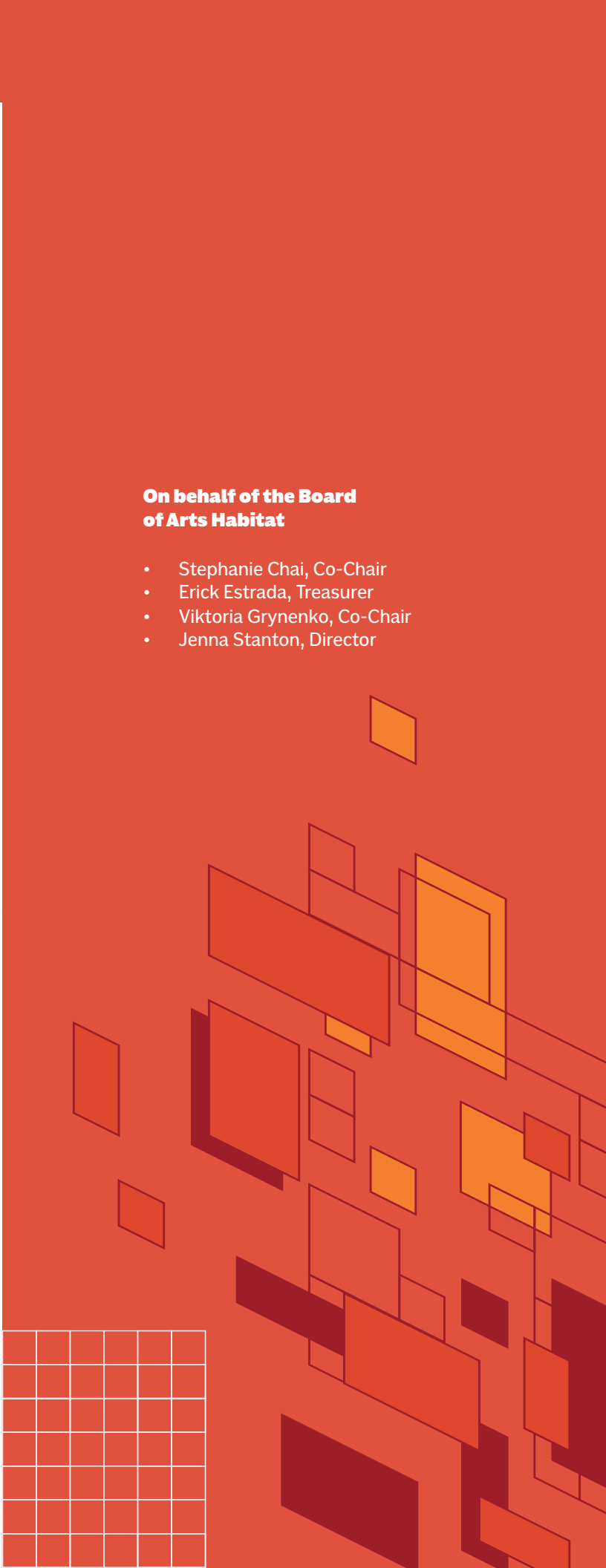
Thank you for your ongoing support. We look forward to another year of progress, partnership, and creativity.

Warmly,

The Arts Habitat Edmonton Board

### **On behalf of the Board of Arts Habitat**

- Stephanie Chai, Co-Chair
- Erick Estrada, Treasurer
- Viktoria Grynenko, Co-Chair
- Jenna Stanton, Director



## Message From The Executive Director

2024 has been a transformative year for Arts Habitat Edmonton, marked by ambitious initiatives, meaningful partnerships, and significant milestones redefining Edmonton's creative ecosystem. As we continue our mission to create, manage, and advocate for accessible and sustainable arts spaces, we recognize the profound impact of cultural infrastructure in fostering artistic excellence, community engagement, and economic vitality.

Our strategic pillars—Arts Space Planners, Operators and Managers, Advocates, and Trusted Advisors—guide our efforts to build a thriving cultural landscape. This year, we proudly celebrated the openings of ArtsHub Ortona — a revitalized creative space that reinforces our commitment to sustainability and artistic innovation, and ArtsHub Creative Studios — another refreshed space offering long-term office and studio solutions in the heart of the Arts District. ArtsHub McLuhan House continues to flourish as an incubator for literary and artistic growth, and ArtsHub I18, our live/work studios, has remained fully rented for the past decade.

Beyond physical spaces, we have deepened our role as a trusted advisor by leading the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan (ECIP), embedding cultural planning into city-wide development. Investing in non-market cultural infrastructure has both direct and indirect benefits for any community, including improved quality of life, increased economic activity, and enhanced competitiveness in attracting people and investment.

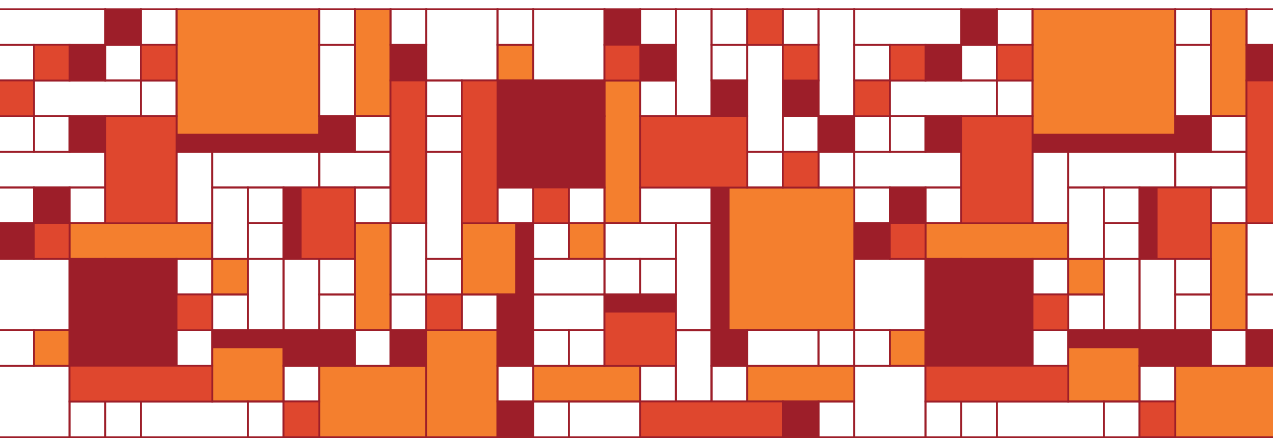
Through shifting funding landscapes, political upheaval and the recent pandemic, our resolve remains strong. Through strategic partnerships, advocacy, and research-driven approaches, we are building a resilient, future-focused cultural infrastructure.

As I step down after 11 years with Arts Habitat Edmonton, I reflect on the incredible journey we have shared. The progress we have made is a testament to the dedication of our exceptional staff and board, whose passion and expertise have shaped AHE into the dynamic organization it is today. I am confident that, under new leadership, AHE will continue to elevate Edmonton's creative landscape.

Looking ahead, our vision remains bold: to make Edmonton a beacon for artistic expression, inclusion, and collaboration. With the continued support of our funders, municipal partners, artists, and community stakeholders, we are shaping a legacy that ensures the arts remain an essential and celebrated part of our city's identity. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey. Together, we are shaping the cultural heartbeat of Edmonton for generations to come.

Respectfully,

Julian Mayne



# Defining Cultural Infrastructure

## Cultural Infrastructure Development Across Canada and Its Future In Edmonton

In January 2020, AHE published a Cultural Infrastructure Planning Report. This initial research was conducted to understand how Canadian and international municipalities define cultural infrastructure. In our findings, there were commonalities between cities, for instance, many underlined the importance of both public-facing infrastructure, for the use of performing, exhibition, and public attendance, and also internal-facing infrastructure like administration spaces and studios. The findings also showed that cities varied in how they labelled different art space types. For instance, the City of Calgary identifies internal-facing spaces as 'Cultural Support Spaces,' and similarly, Seattle labels these as 'Work Space For Arts Support Organizations' and both are primarily occupied by arts funding, arts sector, and arts advocacy organizations. It was also seen that some cities see cultural spaces as drivers of community connectivity, cultural identity, and economic activity.

The City of Edmonton delivers its cultural initiatives for the arts and heritage sectors through its direct partnerships with three arts and heritage organizations. These organizations are Arts Habitat Edmonton, the Edmonton Arts Council, and the Edmonton Heritage Council. The City oversees its arts and heritage sector through its Community Services branch and directly funds each partner organization to deliver on its mandate. This outsourced decision-making power regarding culture is not distinct to Edmonton; many Canadian municipalities work with partnered organizations to plan, administer, and deliver cultural infrastructure. This allows those who are most actively engaged and participating in the arts and heritage sectors to take the lead in managing programming, granting, and administration.

List of Canadian municipalities and their direct relationships with arts, heritage, and culture sectors:

Municipality	Plan
Toronto	Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto
Winnipeg	Arts and Culture For All Manitobans, Accessibility Plan
Regina	Regina Cultural Plan
Calgary	Cultural Plan
Edmonton	The Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan
Vancouver	Culture Shift (previously known as the Creative City Strategy)
Victoria	Create Victoria Cultural Plan
Ottawa	A Liveable City for All: a New Cultural Roadmap for Ottawa
Halifax	Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan
Montreal	2024-2027 Montréal Cultural Development Agreement

In 2019, the City of Edmonton and its Arts and Heritage partners joined forces to create Connections and Exchanges: A 10-Year Plan To Transform Arts and Heritage In Edmonton (C&E). In it, AHE - together with its partners (the Edmonton Arts Council, Edmonton Heritage Council, and the City of Edmonton) was tasked with developing the City of Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan (ECIP).

To date, AHE has led the creation of this ECIP and examines the current state, obstacles, plans, and unmet need for cultural infrastructure in the city, creating an actionable framework for how Edmonton can support and grow this infrastructure over the next decade. The plan will also reflect and reinforce Edmonton's Indigenous communities' importance, principles, art, and cultural presence. The ECIP will better understand what assets the city has, if they are at risk, and what steps can be taken to support and protect them.

In 2024, AHE hosted a series of engagement meetings with the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan Advisory Committee, comprised of individuals with expertise from various backgrounds (i.e. local business associations, cultural centers, museums, science centers, performing arts centers, art administrations, artists, indigenous artists and leaders, and urban developers). Throughout the year, AHE presented its findings from its first research phase to the ECIP Advisory Committee and its C&E partners. The findings were shared to establish an understanding and gather feedback from the committee, prior to the engagement phase launching at the end of 2024.

The engagement phase will allow Edmontonians to share and identify key opportunities Edmonton has when planning for cultural infrastructure. The ECIP has the potential to change the cultural landscape of Edmonton. By connecting Edmontonians to vibrant arts and cultural spaces, the ECIP will impact community wellness by facilitating places for healing, connection, and exploring meaning, while also nurturing safe spaces for exploring diversity, equity, and inclusion. We've learned through our work with Naheyawin and Wen Chen that art is inextricably linked to cultural journeys, and space that allows people to gather together to share culture, but also have culture-specific spaces to practice and nurture culture, will continue to push efforts toward reconciliation and champion cultural independence. Strengthening Edmonton's arts and culture communities in a holistic, cohesive way will break down societal barriers, and bring organizations and people

together for the benefit of all. The residual impacts of planned cultural infrastructure will continue to make way for community connection, creating a sense of belonging for generations of Edmontonians to come.

Being Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan, Edmontonians have an opportunity to define the scope and scale of what this plan could include. The ECIP will be rooted in the land and history of this place and the people who have gathered here since time immemorial. With the participation of Edmonton's many communities, we can achieve a plan with a deep understanding of this place to provide a uniquely Edmonton approach to nurturing and creating space for gathering, celebrating, creating, and contributing.

The ECIP will nurture a unified city that supports arts, culture, and heritage while including diverse groups and driving local economies. As a collaborative plan, created by the community for the community, an ECIP will enrich lives, cultivate a vibrant and exciting city, bolster the local economy, and support an entire sector of passionately creative and caring entrepreneurs. AHE is excited to continue its research into the next phase and get one step closer to creating an ECIP that will transform how arts and heritage are experienced across our city's spaces and places. By cultivating the key support systems needed for thriving cultural experiences, the plan will provide creators and participants with expanded opportunities to produce and engage with culture in ways meaningful to them.





## The Challenges Developers Face In Building For The Arts

**This article was inspired by a short interview with Alim Somji, Executive Vice President of Jaffer Group of Companies on January 28, 2025.**

In September 2021, AHE was in the process of searching for space and began conversations with Mile Zero Dance Company about a space on 106 Avenue owned by Jaffer Group of Companies. This sparked a series of discovery meetings between AHE and Jaffer, which led to the discussion of the potential partnership in one of Jaffer's buildings. The space in question was the unique 2-story brownstone building (10131 97 Street) with its unfinished basement. At the time the second floor of this building was Jaffer's office, and before that, it was proposed to be a small luxury inn, and in the 1950s there was a bowling alley in the basement. Does Bowladrome ring a bell? The first conversations were originally about the basement but grew in scope when Jaffer offered to move their office out of the second floor and add it to the space considered for the project. Today, thanks to Jaffer Group of Companies and AHE, the building serves a new purpose once again, as ArtsHub Creative Studios - Edmonton's newest collection of artist and arts workers' studios/offices located downtown.

When asked what value and opportunity Jaffer saw for the building in a partnership with AHE, Somji replied, "Initially, our discussion began about the unfinished basement space. It is difficult to hit a downtown market value for a space on a basement level. We were in a position to look for the right fit. We didn't need to charge thousands of dollars to make it work. If we get the right use in the basement and a consistent tenant who can manage the collection of spaces; we wanted people to be in the space and be profitable in the space."



*Completed Facade Construction at ArtsHub Creative Studios*

It's well known the arts breathe life back into derelict places. We've seen many vibrancy initiatives that bring activity back to ignored blocks of space downtown. Somji said, "We don't want to cause a tenant ail, we want the tenant to be comfortable being in their space, and plan on being here for a long time." It was clear in the interview that Somji saw a lasting impact on opening an arts facility of this size in the area. "It adds a lot to the neighborhood. When you have 20-30 people accessing this space at various times of day, that's 20-30 people who will pay for a coffee in the area, or grab lunch at the restaurants down the street, who might stick around for a show or a festival in the evening. When we nurture the relationships and environments that surround other buildings we own, even if it means taking less, the community will benefit." It's contrary to the popular belief that 'taking less' will benefit the bottom line "when the community is healthy and safe in the long view the company wins." To Somji investing in the longevity of the space will "benefit not only your children but anyone's children. It's good for a lot of people."

Jaffer has partnered with other public organizations in the past. Somji states "things never go badly with charitable organizations." Habitat for Humanity is one of the previous relationships Jaffer had nurtured, and they had a Family Center in a building they used to own. In regards to ArtsHub Creative Studios, "it's the first partnership that is by far the most unique, and it's accomplishing numerous things at the same time, from a perspective outside of the arts, having dynamic space for the arts is very important. Space is costly, so it needs to be multipurpose to meet the most needs."

A key lesson for Jaffer from this experience has been that for these types of projects, the partners may require flexibility. Somji says, “This building wasn’t purpose-built for the arts. One of the primary reasons people aren’t building for the arts is they don’t know what’s needed. There is a need for purpose-built art space expertise.” According to Somji, Jaffer has been successful in scaling the business. Instead of building new and offering the best properties at a premium price, they’ve been able to consistently deliver high-quality, safe spaces at an affordable price. At ArtsHub Creative Studios, AHE’s expertise allocated the budget effectively so the space renovation costs were kept to a minimum with maximum space functionality for various art practices.

ArtsHub Creative Studios was funded through a mixed investment model. “Developers aren’t familiar with the grant writing process, so it was mutually beneficial that the non-profit (Arts Habitat) was able to help secure those funds,” said Somji, “we were able to utilize the facade grant for the exterior of the building, and that is something that will ultimately benefit the area and surrounding properties.”

When asked what the biggest barriers and/or risks developers face in building arts and cultural infrastructure, Somji replied simply “It’s not even so much the money. Developers spend a lot more money on unnecessary things. Fundamentally, it’s the lack of knowing what is needed for those spaces to function for the arts. It was great when we were revising the budget, Arts Habitat was able to come in and say ‘This is what we need, this is what we want, and this would be nice if.’” In addition to cutting costs, Somji wanted to reiterate that organizations like AHE, have cost in mind, and to trust them to spend the money. To make the most financially viable property you need the most precise design and execution. Somji said his trust in AHE grew over the first initial meetings he had, and as they discussed the scope and scale of the project, it solidified his confidence in partnering with the organization. He would recommend to any developers to make sure to take the time to get an understanding of each other’s goals, and ask the right questions.



January 31, 2024, Alim Somji, Executive Vice President of Jaffer Group of Companies (pictured left), tours Arts Habitat Edmonton employees through the unfinished basement of what is now ArtsHub Creative Studios.



After: The Gallery on the Studio Level at ArtsHub Creative Studios.



After: Hallway to the studios on the Studio Level at ArtsHub Creative Studios.

To bring a facility like ArtsHub Creative Studios to market, organizations need to be flexible. Jaffer was willing to be creative and AHE was able to be flexible to help close that gap. There is a lot of underutilized space existing in Edmonton. Somji advises other public organizations to get the right people on board and search for developers who can see their vision and will be willing to engage in those thought exercises. He also recommends organizations have a leader with the domain expertise and decision-making power to say this is what is workable at the minimum.

Somji doesn't want to sugarcoat the truth, "Money is real. Landlords need to change lightbulbs, it's not public service," and "the arts, feel that they've been neglected. People believe there is no money in the arts because that's what we've been told. It is about finding the right partner. Arts Habitat understands finances. The arts can have a business mindset." If other developers are hesitant to invest in the arts, Somji says "it's good to be flexible on the amount of money you make as a property owner. There is a benefit in exchanging the top dollar for a sustainable client. If someone is treated poorly, and you give them the bare minimum it will make their day. Artists don't feel valued, and meeting their basic needs is the first step in the right direction. First, you need to nail the space purpose. There is stability and future growth if you are willing to make that sacrifice and build that relationship." A takeaway is to be willing to hear it out, and think about the adaptive reuse of everything. He can, "guarantee industry nights of people who are passionate about art and who will come into the neighborhood to share a drink. There is money coming here to this location. Making these investments can create a nice experience here that you wouldn't otherwise be able to have."

According to Somji, Jaffer has been successful in scaling the business. Instead of building new and offering the best properties at a premium price, they've been able to consistently deliver high-quality, safe spaces at an affordable price.



January 31, 2024, Alim Somji explains how we will utilize the facade grant to improve the streetscape.

## Looking Back on the Impact of Artscape Toronto

Artscape was a non-profit organization that played a big role in creating spaces for artists in Toronto. It originated in 1986 when artists were having trouble finding affordable places to live and work. Over time, Artscape grew and managed many buildings across the city. These spaces included studios, homes, and places for artists to show their work. Artscape helped turn old buildings into new creative hubs. They worked with the city, businesses, and communities to make these projects happen. Their goal was to make Toronto a better place for artists and to use art to improve neighborhoods. However, after facing complications from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Artscape had to close down in 2023. Despite this, the organization left a lasting impact on Toronto's cultural scene. Canadian Arts communities have much to learn from the evolution and impact of Artscape.<sup>1</sup>

One of Artscape's most famous projects was the Wychwood Barns, which opened in 2008. This place became popular and showed how art could help neighbourhoods thrive through the arts. Artscape also worked in other parts of Toronto, like the Distillery District and Liberty Village. In these areas, they helped bring in artists and creative people which made the neighborhoods more lively and interesting.

Artscape didn't just focus on one type of space. They made studios, homes for artists, places for performances, and hubs where different creative people could work together. They even helped artists buy their own homes in some projects. This mix of different spaces helped support all kinds of artists and cultural workers in Toronto.

Over time, Artscape's work became known as "creative placemaking." Creative placemaking is a collaborative approach to urban and community development that



*Pictured, The exterior of Artscape Wychwood Barns.*

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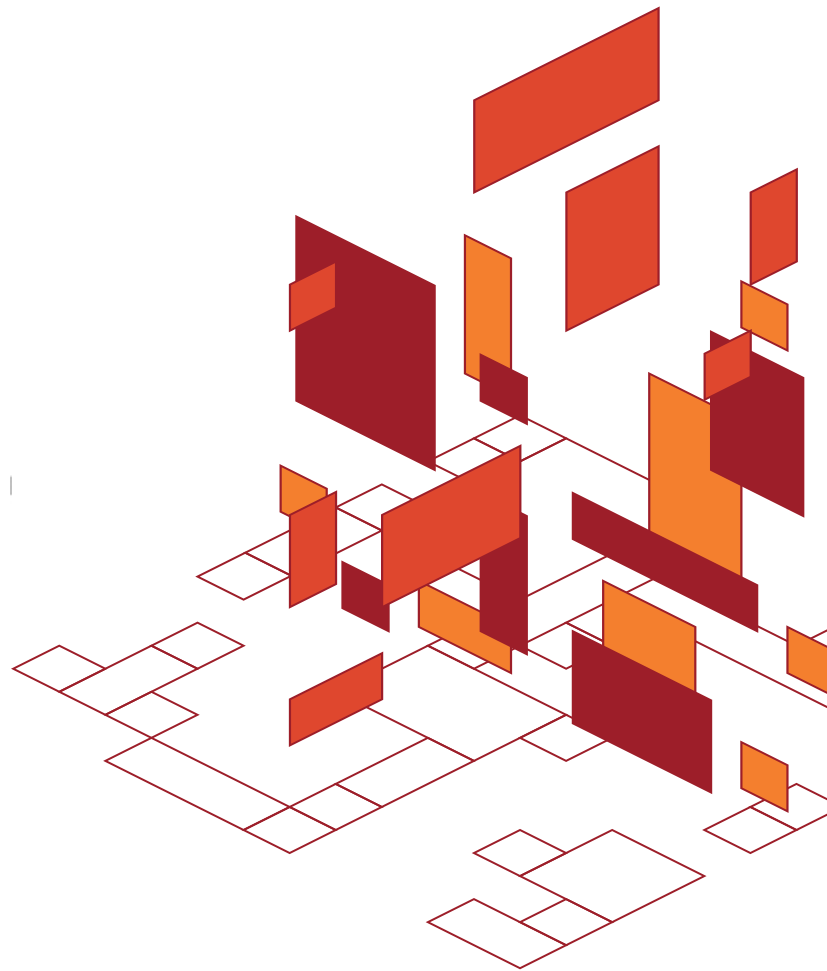
<sup>1</sup> Artscape. *Thirty Years of Creative Placemaking*

integrates arts, culture, and creativity into the planning, design, and management of public spaces. It seeks to strengthen the social, cultural, and economic fabric of a community by fostering connections, enhancing the aesthetic and functional value of places, and supporting cultural and artistic expression.<sup>2</sup>

Artscape's success was built on working together with many different groups. They teamed up with governments, non-profit organizations, community groups, businesses, and private developers to create spaces for artists in Toronto. This helped them create projects that were good for everyone, not just artists. When they made the Wychwood Barns in 2008, they brought together many different partners to turn an old building into a place for art and community events.

The City of Toronto was a big supporter, giving Artscape funding to run their programs and helping them find places for artists to work. For example, they worked together to make artist studios in Liberty Village. Artscape received funding from other levels of government for these larger scale projects.

Private developers played a big role too. Artscape often worked with them to include artist spaces in new building projects. One example was the Artscape Triangle Lofts, where a developer agreed to make affordable homes for artists as part of a bigger condo project.



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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Pru Robey, Director of Artscape's Creative Placemaking Lab

Artscape used several innovative strategies to involve marginalized voices in their projects. To engage marginalized groups, Artscape partnered with local organizations and artists. For example, they collaborated with UrbanArts and MANIFESTO to launch youth programming aimed at engaging at-risk youth who had little access to mentorship opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

Artscape also recognized the importance of addressing barriers to participation. They worked to make their spaces and programs accessible and welcoming to diverse communities. This included offering programs in multiple languages and ensuring their facilities were physically accessible. By actively working to remove obstacles, they made it easier for marginalized groups to get involved.

Artscape's experience reinforces AHE's approach in developing cultural spaces and supporting artists in Edmonton. Artscape's use of community involvement helped build support for projects and ensured they were well-integrated into neighborhoods. AHE values community engagement and collaboration in the development and management of its ArtsHubs. Like Artscape, AHE works closely with local communities, governments, and private developers to create spaces that reflect the needs and desires of artists and residents.

Another common value shared by both organizations is the power of adaptive reuse. Artscape and AHE demonstrate how transforming old, unused buildings into vibrant cultural hubs could energize neighborhoods and create affordable spaces for artists. AHE is hopeful to see how it's now redesigned historical spaces, ArtsHub Ortona and ArtsHub Creative Studios, will impact Edmontonians. Adaptive reuse is a great resource to provide much-needed cultural infrastructure, but also

preserved heritage buildings and create unique, attractive spaces.

Artscape also showed the value of mixed-use developments that combined affordable housing for artists with cultural spaces and amenities. Projects like Artscape Wychwood Barns and Daniels Spectrum included live/work studios for artists alongside performance venues, galleries, and community spaces.<sup>4</sup> This clustering of creative people and organizations helped create a critical mass that could support and inspire each other while also benefiting the wider community.<sup>5</sup>

Artscape's experience also highlighted the need for flexibility and adaptability in cultural space development. As the needs of artists and communities evolved, and as challenges like rising real estate costs emerged, Artscape had to continually innovate and adjust its approaches. This included exploring new funding models, partnerships, and types of spaces to meet changing demands and ensure the long-term viability of their projects.<sup>6</sup> In order to keep operating costs low, to the benefit professional artists and not-for-profit professional arts organizations, AHE understands the importance of securing funding to offset capital costs on development, and to be proactive in budgeting for increasing cost of space over time.

Arts communities across Canada have lots to thank Artscape for with all of the lessons and insights their legacy has left behind. Their experience reaffirms AHE's mandate to identify, manage and build appropriate and accessible spaces for the arts in Edmonton and area. AHE's vision to create dynamic, sustainable, and entrepreneurial artistic communities that thrive in the Edmonton area remains strong.

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<sup>3</sup> Artscape. *Discover up-and-coming artists of colour through Artscape Weston Common's new Run It Black live showcase series*

<sup>4</sup> *Community Engagement In The Arts*

<sup>5</sup> Artscape. *Building Thriving Communities*

<sup>6</sup> *Creative placemaking can be used to change the neighbourhood narrative*

## Alignment As Art Partners

Throughout 2024, the Connections & Exchanges partners, Arts Habitat Edmonton, the Edmonton Arts Council, the Edmonton Heritage Council, and the City of Edmonton have been meeting regularly to support AHE as it leads the development of Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan. In 2024, AHE entered its Engagement Phase in capturing what Edmontonians want to see in the ECIP.

To support AHE during the engagement phase of developing the ECIP:

- The Edmonton Art Council and the Edmonton Heritage Council have been sharing the ECIP survey link in their newsletters.
- All organizations have been participating in the workshop-styled meetings, allowing each to share their expertise and strategies on how best to engage with Edmontonians.
- EAC attended the City's opening of ArtsHub Ortona to show their support for the occasion.



*Pictured, C&E partners meeting to discuss the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan.*



*September 2024, AHE staff toured the City of Edmonton's Festival and Events Liason, and the City of Edmonton's Orange Hub staff through the final stages of the ArtsHub Ortona rehabilitation.*



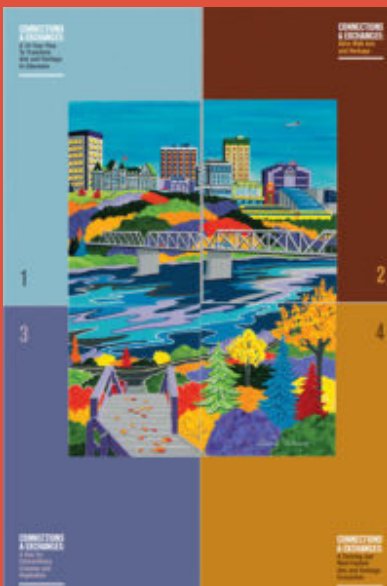
*Dec 12, 2024, Members of the City of Edmonton's Civic Events and Festivals branch, the Edmonton Arts Council and other invitees attended ArtsHub Ortona's opening ceremony.*



# Connections & Exchanges

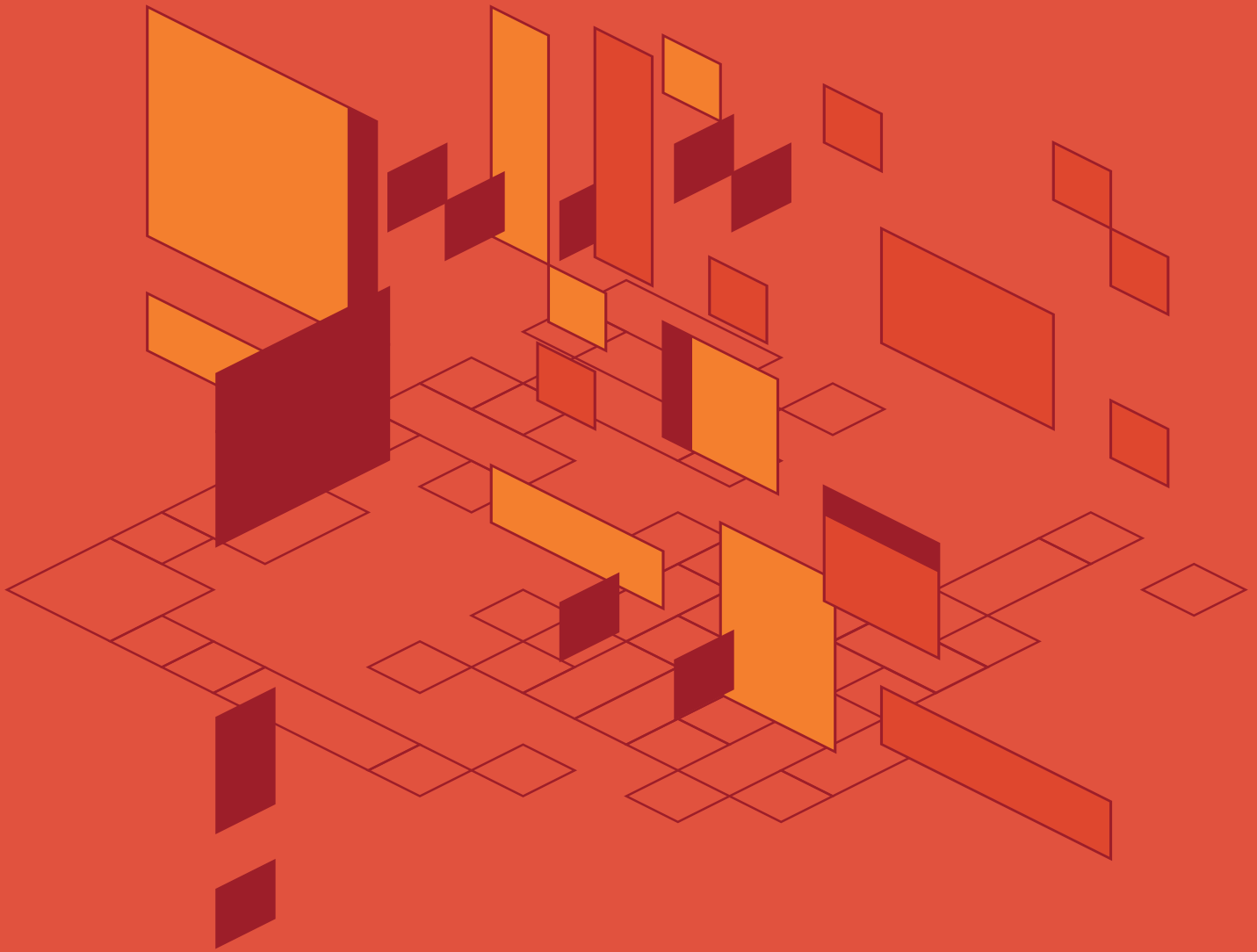
The City of Edmonton delivers its cultural initiatives for the arts and heritage sectors through its direct partnerships with three arts and heritage organizations. These organizations are the Edmonton Arts Council, Arts Habitat Edmonton, and the Edmonton Heritage Council.

The partnership of the three organizations created Connections & Exchanges. Connections & Exchanges is a 10-year (2019-2029) Arts and Heritage plan that lights the path for Arts and Culture in Edmonton. In alignment with the CONNECTEDMONTON - the Strategic Plan created by City Council, Connections & Exchanges sets out to support Arts and Culture communities, turn Edmonton into a hub for creativity and develop a thriving and well-funded arts and heritage ecosystem.



## AHE's responsibilities in Connections & Exchanges plan include the following:

- Contribute actively to placemaking that includes cultural landscape, natural history, built history, object, language, and story.
- Apply a Fourth Pillar approach to City of Edmonton planning and policy development: social, environmental, economic, and cultural.
- Provide change capital to cultural organizations to retool and reorganize to meet the needs of a rapidly changing city.
- Work with City Administration and cultural agencies to research, develop, build and seek approval from City Council for the City of Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan.
- Indigenous peoples are supported in revitalizing and participating in cultural traditions locally that reflect their connections to ancestors, the land and living traditions.
- Stand alongside Indigenous leaders in cultural work and cultural organizations and projects.
- Resource Indigenous-led activities that support the reclamation of Indigeneity.
- Adopt a holistic definition of civic vitality that includes culture (inclusive of heritage) as a valued component.
- Encourage active civic engagement and participation in cultural activities.
- Provide tools, resources and advice to the cultural community in support of space audits, capital project management and asset management solutions.



# Reporting on Arts Habitat's Strategic Pillars

AHE has identified four strategic pillars that categorize the work that is being done every day in support of Arts and Culture, and the delivery of Connections & Exchanges outcomes.

**ARTS SPACE PLANNERS**

**ARTS SPACE OPERATORS AND MANAGERS**

**ARTS SPACE ADVOCATES**

**ARTS SPACE TRUSTED ADVISORS**

## STRATEGIC PILLAR I

# We Are Arts Space Planners

- We are the guardians of Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan. We understand what arts spaces are, what exists in our city, what's needed, and what changes take place in the arts space ecosystem in Edmonton.
- We will incent the development of non-market facilities for the arts and affordable housing for artists by becoming a granting partner with arts organizations.

## 2024 Report as Planners

### **Proof of Concept for Arts Space Granting Program**

AHE has been working on a proof of concept for an Arts Space Granting Program to strengthen Edmonton's cultural infrastructure by supporting arts facilities. The program's objective is to provide sustainable resources for arts spaces, filling a crucial funding gap. Future growth includes increasing its prioritization within the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan (ECIP), overcoming funding limitations, and developing the internal capacity within AHE to advance this. AHE is refining funding strategies and preparing for discussions with ECIP in the coming year.

### **Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework**

AHE is implementing a MEL Framework to align organizational goals with its strategic plan and ensure data-driven decision-making. A work plan guides integration, with stakeholder feedback shaping refinements. Efforts include coordinating a "Lunch and Learn" with City Council and community engagement scheduled for 2025. Interim reporting and evaluation are planned to ensure the framework supports transparency and adaptability.

### **Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan (ECIP)**

AHE is collaborating with the Edmonton Arts Council, Edmonton Heritage Council, and the City of Edmonton to strengthen cultural infrastructure in Edmonton. Key achievements include completing a communications strategy and advancing an engagement plan with diverse stakeholder input. Challenges involve defining "cultural infrastructure" due to varying expectations, highlighting the need for municipal-level policy development.

## STRATEGIC PILLAR 2

# We Are Arts Space Operators and Managers

- We own, lease, build, renovate, and operate property for the benefit of Edmonton's cultural sector.
- We work with the City to develop and manage City buildings as purpose-built arts spaces.



## 2024 Report as Arts Space Operators and Managers

### Showcasing New Arts Spaces

To raise awareness of its ArtsHub spaces, AHE launched one-pager websites and integrated offerings into its *Habitat* platform, doubling artist registrations. A newsletter campaign generated strong interest, and open house events are planned to formally introduce these spaces to the community. ArtsHub Ortona's official community launch and public celebration are scheduled for Summer 2025, featuring speeches and community engagement activities.

### ArtsHub Creative Studios

ArtsHub Creative Studios is nearing completion as a long-term rental space for artists and not-for-profit professional arts organizations. Delayed construction shifted artist and arts organization move-ins to the new year, with an open house planned for 2025. Despite delays, AHE has generated tenant interest through tours and promotional efforts. Financial planning and contingency measures are in place to ensure sustainability as construction concludes.

### ArtsHub I18 Live/Work

ArtsHub I18 continues to provide live/work spaces for artists, supported by AHE's fiscal and operational efforts. Key achievements include extending the "Heal the Divide" art installation, revising bylaws, and securing a favorable mortgage. AHE is planning an open house and reserve fund to address rising costs and sustain affordability for tenants.



*Pictured, Professional artist Eric Beliveau in his Project Studio.*

### ArtsHub Ortona

Following rehabilitation by the City of Edmonton, ArtsHub Ortona reopened as a vibrant space for Edmonton's artistic community. A lottery system facilitated diverse tenant selection, and a Community Artist Advisory Committee was formed to guide operations. Project Studio allocations were completed, and selected artists moved in at the beginning of September 2024. AHE plans to enhance promotions, host events, and build a space sponsorship program, while strengthening ties with the Edmonton arts community.

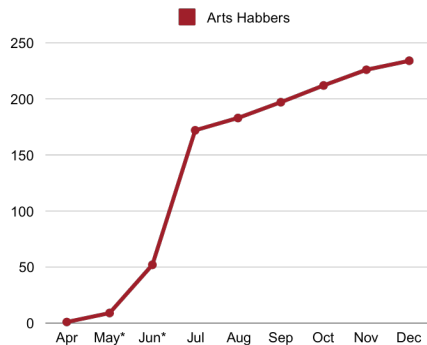


*Pictured, Rob Shields, DPhil, speaks at the McLuhan Conversation Series.*

### ArtsHub McLuhan House

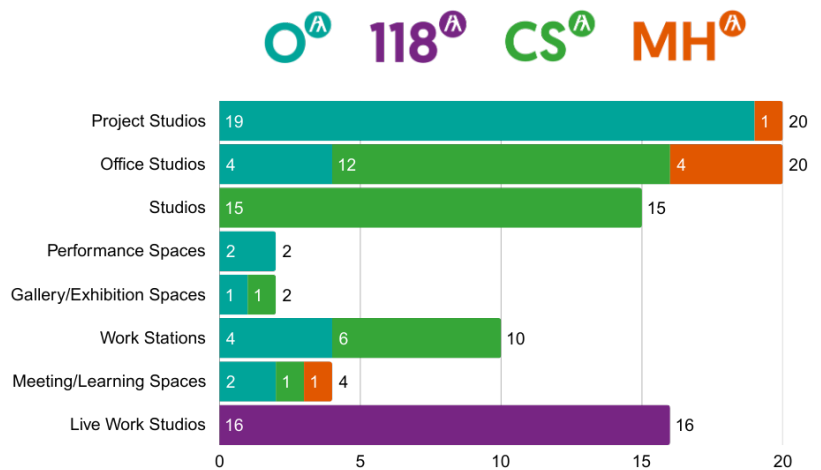
ArtsHub McLuhan House supports literary and artistic activities, housing tenants like the Edmonton Poetry Festival, YouthWrite, violin artist/instructor Viktoria Grynenko, and frequent bookings by the Highlands Ukulele Gang for lesson programming. The Garage Studio Program welcomed our 9th residency and hosted successful exhibitions. AHE is improving space management with new booking software and conducting year-end evaluations to ensure this historic space remains a dynamic cultural asset.

Growth of Arts Habitat Members — Arts Happers — In 2024 Since Launching *The Habitat* In April



\*During these months Arts Habitat Edmonton ran a targeted awareness campaign for Project Studio Applications at ArtsHub Ortona. Applicants were required to become Art Happers to apply for a Project Studio. From Aug-Dec is organic growth.

Breakdown of Art Space Types Across *The Habitat*:



STRATEGIC PILLAR 3

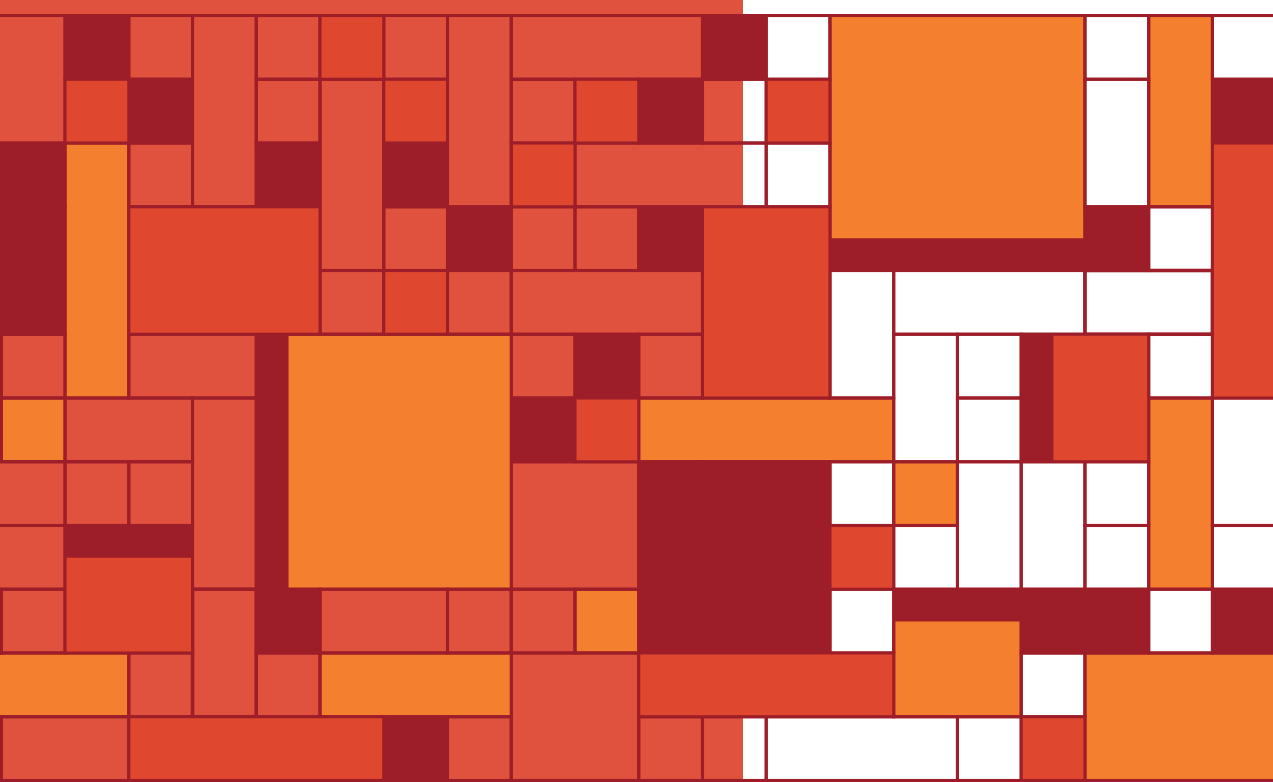
## We Are Arts Space Advocates

- We are the voice of art space issues in Edmonton. We lead the civic conversation about the value of and need for, spaces in which artists can create, rehearse, exhibit, perform, and live.
- We convene conversations with the private and not-for-profit sectors about the need for the identification, development, and management of arts spaces in Edmonton.
- We shape and influence public policy and investment to support thriving cultural infrastructure and public spaces for the arts.

## 2024 Report as Arts Space Advocates

**Create a list of prospective arts, community, and business partners for collaborative arts space development.**

AHE has been actively working to establish a network of arts, community, and business partners to support arts space development, positioning AHE as a leader in Edmonton's cultural infrastructure. AHE continues to compile a list of potential partners, including developers, artists, and community leaders who are aligned with AHE's mission. This list lays the foundation for meaningful partnerships that will help advance AHE's arts spaces and create more collaborative opportunities across Edmonton's cultural and community sectors.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 4

## We Are Arts Space Trusted Advisors

- We understand the space needs of the arts community and use this insight to advise and support the City on projects involving existing or potential living and working arts spaces.
- We report to City Council annually on the space needs of the arts community, and our progress in planning, operating and managing arts spaces.

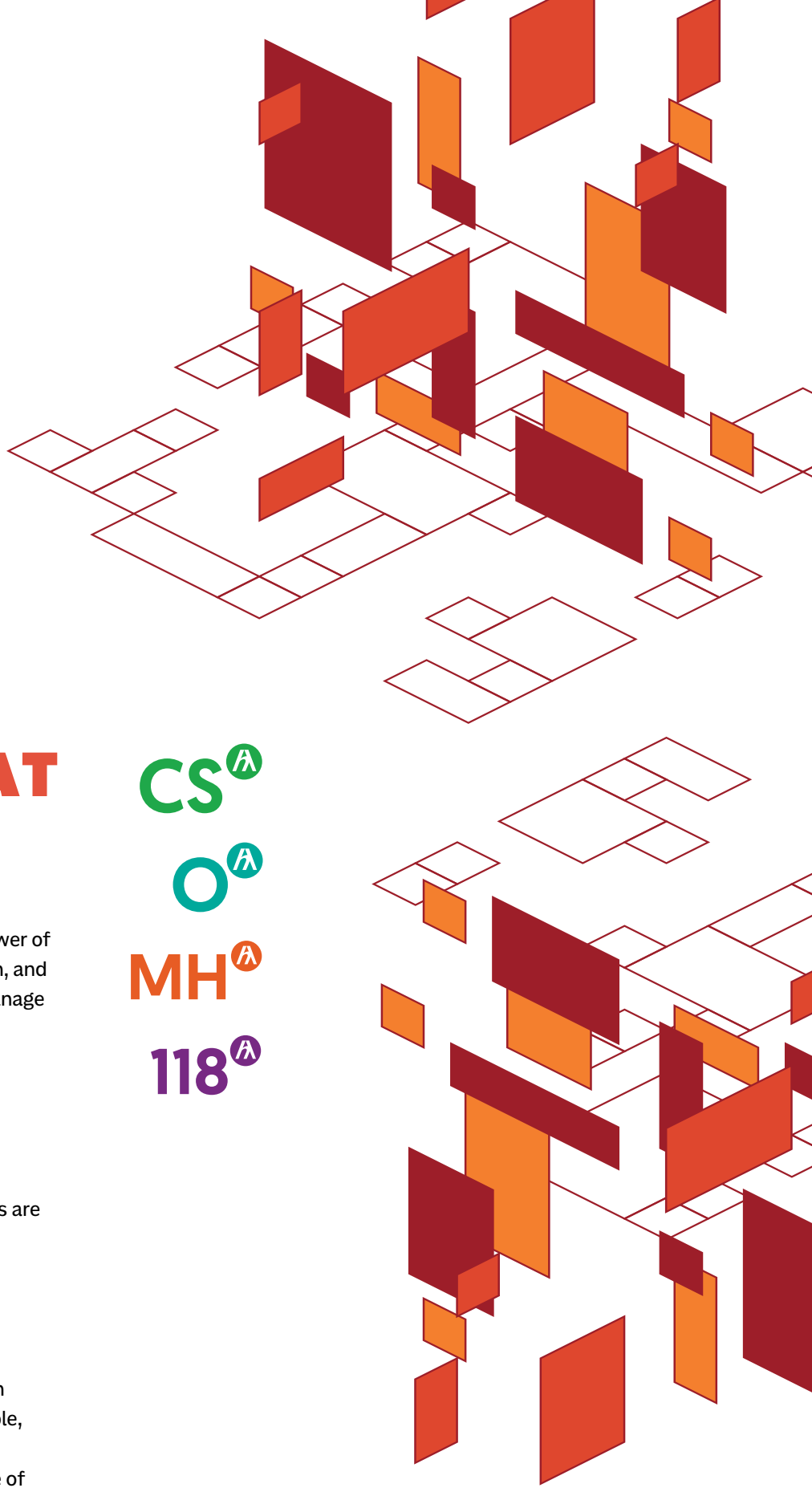
## 2024 Report as Arts Space Trusted Advisors

### Strategic Plan Introduction

AHE introduced its 2024–2026 Strategic Plan to Edmonton’s arts community and stakeholders, distributing it to universities, City staff, arts organizations, and City Councilors. This outreach aims to build awareness of AHE’s goals and foster engagement in Edmonton’s cultural infrastructure. Looking ahead, AHE plans to expand its contact list, encourage new subscribers through *The Habitat* platform, and strengthen its role as a trusted advisor in cultural development.

### Art Space Map Redevelopment

AHE is redeveloping its Art Space Map to provide an accessible, interactive resource for Edmonton’s arts community. Early discussions with the Edmonton Arts Council and partners have been positive. With the previous database contract ending, AHE is exploring new vendors and formats for the map. Future steps include assembling a project team, defining the project scope, and ensuring ongoing maintenance. AHE aims to create a comprehensive tool that supports artists, enhances engagement, and identifies opportunities in Edmonton’s cultural infrastructure.



# THE HABITAT

## Our Arts Spaces

At AHE, we believe in the transformative power of arts spaces that foster creativity, connection, and community. Our mission is to create and manage environments where artists can thrive—spaces that are not only functional but also supportive and inspiring. In this section, we celebrate the progress and achievements of our arts spaces, including ArtsHub Creative Studios, ArtsHub Ortona, ArtsHub McLuhan House, and ArtsHub 118. These unique venues are not just places to work—they are hubs for collaboration, growth, and community engagement. We continue to cultivate these spaces, ensuring that they serve as vital resources for Edmonton’s diverse arts community. As we move forward, we remain committed to providing accessible, affordable, and purpose-built spaces that empower creators and enhance the cultural landscape of our city.

CS<sup>A</sup>

O<sup>A</sup>

MH<sup>A</sup>

118<sup>A</sup>



# ArtsHub Creative Studios

Space for the Arts



ArtsHub Creative Studios is a purpose-built arts facility located at 10131-97 Street, designed to support Edmonton’s professional artists and not-for-profit professional arts organizations. Formerly proposed to be the Annex Inn & Suites, the space has been reimagined through a collaboration between AHE and the Jaffer Group of Companies. It features office spaces for not-for-profit professional arts organizations, long-term studios for professional artists, and bookable spaces for working, meetings, exhibitions and small performances. The studios aim to provide long-term, affordable rental spaces while fostering a vibrant and supportive artistic community.

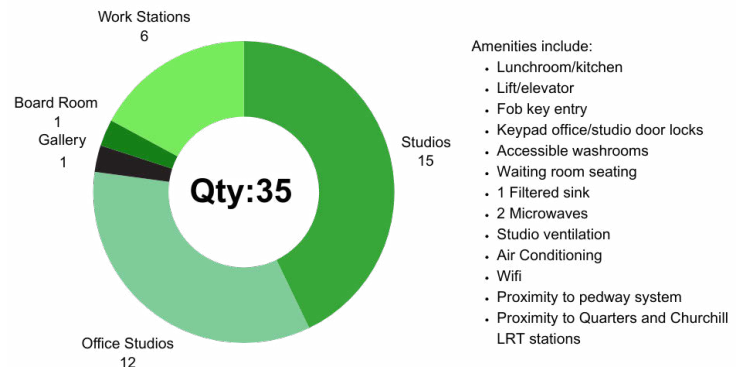
In 2024, ArtsHub Creative Studios saw significant progress as construction neared completion. Notable achievements included:

- The final stages of renovations focused on preparing studio and exhibition spaces, with full construction set to wrap up by December. This allowed AHE to begin planning for full operations and artist move-ins.
- Building tours were conducted to generate awareness and interest among potential tenants, sparking enthusiasm in Edmonton’s arts community.
- The project benefited from grants through the Canadian Heritage Department’s Cultural Spaces Fund and the City of Edmonton’s Downtown Vibrancy Strategy, among others, demonstrating strong financial backing.
- Preparations began for an open house event scheduled for 2025, aiming to showcase the studios and attract broader community interest.



*Pictured, New facade design and awnings at ArtsHub Creative Studios.*

### Breakdown of Space Types and Amenities at ArtsHub Creative Studios:



Funded by the Government of Canada





ArtsHub Ortona, located at 9722-102 Street, is a historic arts facility in Edmonton designed to provide professional artists, not-for-profit professional arts organizations, and the broader community with accessible and collaborative creative spaces. The building underwent significant rehabilitation by the City of Edmonton and is now managed by AHE. ArtsHub Ortona features project studios, offices, meeting/learning, rehearsal, and performance spaces with a focus on fostering collaboration and inclusivity in Edmonton’s artistic ecosystem.

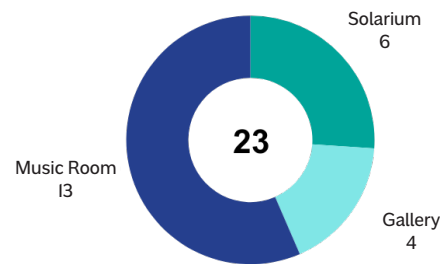
In 2024, ArtsHub Ortona reached several important milestones:

- After years of rehabilitation, ArtsHub Ortona officially reopened as a hub for Edmonton’s diverse artistic community.
- A well-executed application and lottery system resulted in a dynamic mix of tenants, including visual artists, musicians, writers, designers, and multidisciplinary creators. Selected artists moved into the Project Studios in September, forming a vibrant creative community.
- The establishment of the ArtsHub Ortona Artist Advisory Committee, with representation from past tenants, educators, and arts councils, provided valuable guidance on the space’s operations and ensured alignment with community needs.
- Initial promotions generated significant interest, with a waitlist established to manage ongoing demand for space. Preparations began for public-facing events, and a marketing campaign to maximize visibility and engagement.
- Plans were set in motion to develop a space sponsorship program, optimize space usage, and host community events, ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of the ArtsHub.

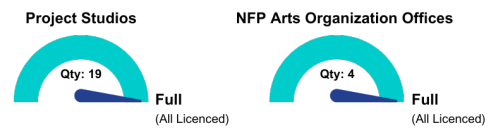


*Pictured: A glimpse inside professional artist Misty Ring's Project Studio.*

Number of Bookings by Art Space at ArtsHub Ortona from Sept 3, 2024 (Opening Day) - Dec 31, 2024:



ArtsHub Ortona Project Studio and Office Space Availability On Opening Day (Sept. 3, 2024):



# ArtsHub McLuhan House

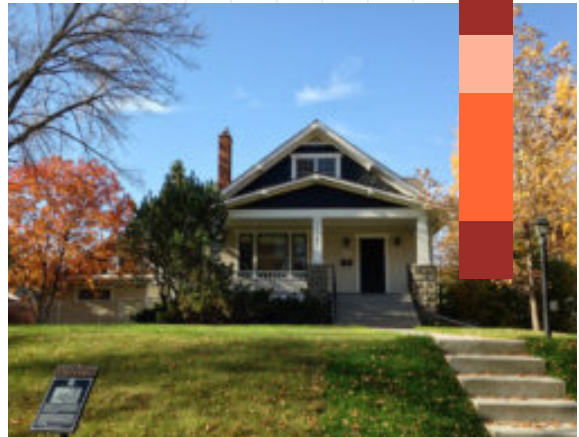
Space for the Arts



ArtsHub McLuhan House, located in Edmonton’s historic Highlands neighborhood, is a dynamic community gathering place that serves as a literary and artistic hub celebrating creativity and cultural engagement. Originally restored by AHE with support from the City of Edmonton and other partners, the house honors the legacy of Marshall McLuhan, a renowned communication theorist. It includes office spaces for literary organizations, long-term office/studio spaces for professional artists and not-for-profit arts organizations, and the McLuhan House Garage Studio, which provides sponsored workspace for artists to pursue self-directed projects, free of charge. The Garage Studio fosters connections between artists and the community through exhibitions, workshops, and collaborative opportunities.

In 2024, ArtsHub McLuhan House achieved several key milestones:

- Tenants include YouthWrite, the Edmonton Poetry Festival, and violinist Viktoria Grynko, who contributed to the vibrancy of the ArtsHub through their programs, teaching, and events, further cementing ArtsHub McLuhan House as a dynamic cultural landmark.
- New booking software — *The Habitat* platform — was introduced to streamline space management and attract more tenants, enhancing the house’s accessibility and efficiency.
- The Highlands Ukulele Gang is a frequent user of the bookable event space for its regular lesson programming.



*Pictured: Exterior street views of ArtsHub McLuhan House*



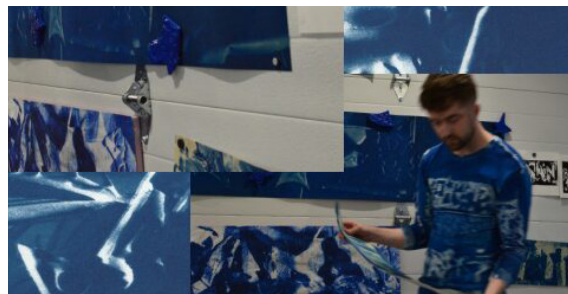
## ArtsHub McLuhan House Garage Studio

Walking out the backdoor of ArtsHub McLuhan House you will spot the ArtsHub McLuhan House Garage Studio. The Garage Studio space offers 540 square feet to work on self-directed projects. This project has been in place since 2016, and has hosted both individual artists and groups. This program aims to offer space and time for the advancement of a professional artist or artist group's career and is offered at no cost. Each spring a call is put out to individual artists and collaborative teams in all disciplines. Emphasis is placed on finding an artist or artists with a strong project proposal and good potential to succeed in producing artwork in the available space/ time. A demonstrated history of self-directed creation and presentation is required.

- In July 2024, the Garage Studio welcomed its 2024-2025 resident artist, Thomas Weir, who brought fresh creative energy to the space.
- The 2023-2024 Garage Studio resident Erika Germain held a successful open studio exhibition in June, engaging the local Highlands community and showcasing the artistic work developed within the space.

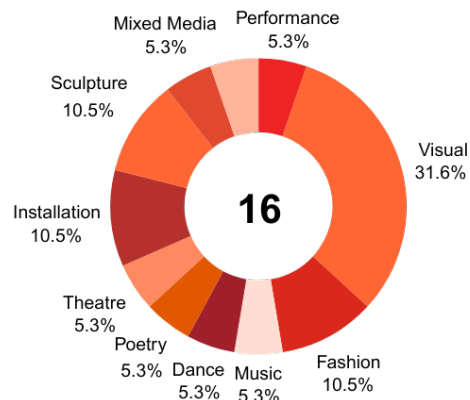


*Erika Germain, ArtsHub McLuhan House's 2023-2024  
 Garage Studio Resident*



*Thomas Weir, ArtsHub McLuhan House's 2024-2025  
 Garage Studio Resident*

### Number of ArtsHub McLuhan House Garage Studio Tenants\* Since Inception (2016) And Art Discipline(s) Explored:



\*Previous Tenants Include Artist  
 Groups and Individual Artists

# ArtsHub 118

Space for the Arts

# 118<sup>A</sup>

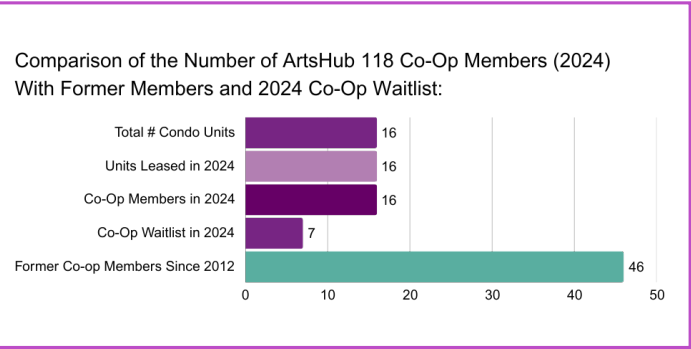
Since 2012, ArtsHub 118, has been owned by AHE. It is located above the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, and the condos are live/work spaces designed to support professional artists and cultural workers in Edmonton. Operated as an artist cooperative, this facility offers affordable housing and studio spaces, enabling residents to create and live within a supportive community. ArtsHub 118 contributes to the revitalization of the Alberta Avenue area while addressing the financial challenges faced by artists by providing accessible, purpose-built spaces.

In 2024, ArtsHub 118 continued to support Edmonton’s arts community with several significant developments:

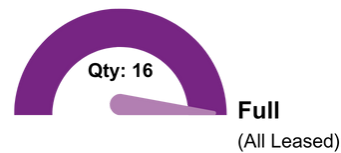
- AHE successfully secured an extension for the “Heal the Divide” public art installation on the building’s exterior, ensuring its presence until August 2025. This artwork serves as a symbol of community and artistic expression.
- The building’s condo association, with input from AHE, completed a comprehensive review and revision of its bylaws, aligning governance practices with the current and future needs of the cooperative.
- AHE secured a one-year variable rate mortgage, providing flexibility and positioning the cooperative to benefit from future favorable interest rate adjustments. A reserve fund was also established to help offset rising operational costs and maintain affordable rent for tenants.
- Plans were initiated for an open house event in alignment with other AHE activities scheduled for 2025, all aimed at fostering broader community connections and promoting the cooperative’s mission.



*Pictured: Street view of ArtsHub 118*



### ArtsHub 118 Condo Availability:



# Project & Funding Partners

## Project Partners



## Funding Partners

Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada



## Programming in Arts Habitat Spaces

The ArtsHubs provide professional artists, not-for-profit professional art organizations, and the Edmonton arts community, appropriate spaces to run a variety of programming.



**February 6, 2024** — McLuhan Conversations Series presents Viktoria Grynenco: Contemporary Works from Ukraine.



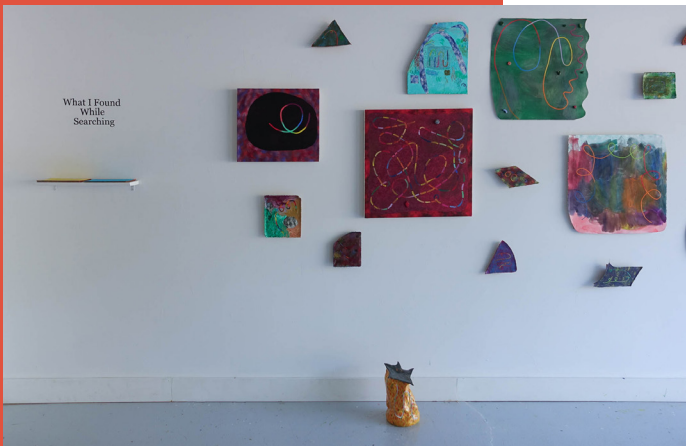
**Spring 2024** — YouthWrite ran their Spring Break Young Writers' Camps at the Highlands United Church with satellite camp programming at ArtsHub McLuhan House.



## Programming in Arts Habitat Spaces



**Spring 2024** — YouthWrite ran their Drawn 2 Character (D2C) program that engages participants in an amazing two-day table-top adventure using official Dungeons and Dragons 5e rules.



**June 15, 2024** — at the close of her ArtsHub McLuhan House Garage Studio residency, Erika Germain invited previous show attendees and members of the public to return to her Garage Studio to see 'What I Found While Searching' – a body of work translated from the notes collected during her show 'Tell Me What You're Searching For And I'll Help You Look'.



**Summer 2024** — YouthWrite ran their Highlands Experience week-long summer camp at the Highlands United Church with satellite camp programming at ArtsHub McLuhan House.



## Programming in Arts Habitat Spaces



**October 18, 2024** — MADE x Edmonton Design Week Friday Night Party.



**November 5, 2024** — The exhibition of “One man, talents many... Wadym Dobrolige’s Contribution to the Canadian Cultural Experience (1950s–60s)” was on display at the ArtsHub Ortona Gallery for public viewing in November.

On the opening night (Nov. 5), many gathered inside ArtsHub Ortona’s Solarium to celebrate the exhibition and listen to a performance by the Elegance String Quartet.



From left to right, Larisa Sembaliuk Cheladyn, Lada Tsybala and Dmytro Yesypenko pose for a photo in the Gallery.



## Programming in Arts Habitat Spaces



**December 10, 2024** — McLuhan Conversations  
Series 2: What's the big deal about reality, anyway?



**December 12, 2024** — The City of Edmonton  
officially opened ArtsHub Ortona and recognized the  
completion of the Ortona Armoury Rehabilitation.  
Attendees gathered inside the Solarium to celebrate  
the momentous occasion. Speeches were given  
and followed by The Trio—featuring Project Studio  
artist and cellist Christine Hanson, accompanied by  
violinist Jennifer Bustin and guitarist Jamie Philip.



After the performance, attendees were taken on a  
guided tour of the second floor's Project Studios.  
See Mayor Amarjeet Sohi rejoice in the work of  
professional artist Misty Ring as he tours her Project  
Studio.

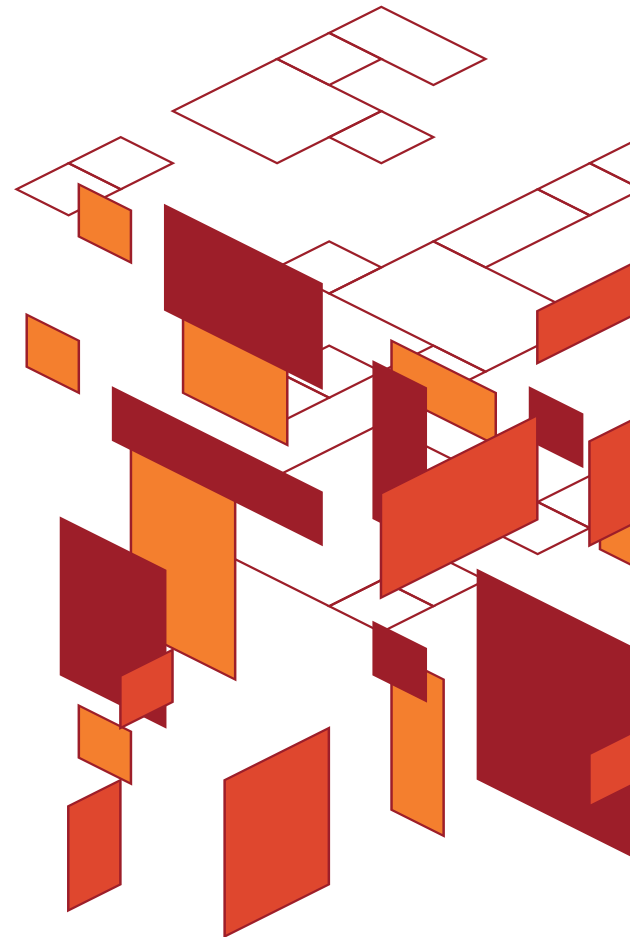


From left to right, Erick Estrada, Treasurer of the Arts  
Habitat Edmonton Board of Directors, Julian Mayne,  
Executive Director of Arts Habitat Edmonton, Mayor  
Amarjeet Sohi, The City of Edmonton, and Ken  
Chapman previous Chair of the Arts Habitat  
Edmonton Board of Directors, posed for a photo  
inside the Solarium.

# Programming in Arts Habitat Spaces



**December 21, 2024** — Holiday Nostalgia Smyth Barrière & Beloved Holiday Classics in concert by Wild Rose Chamber of Music Institute in the Solarium at ArtsHub Ortona.



# 2024 Arts Habitat Edmonton Directory

## Board



Stephanie Chai  
Co-Chair



Erick Estrada  
Treasurer



Viktoria Grynenko  
Co-Chair



Jenna Stanton  
Director

## Staff



Julian Mayne  
Executive Director



Doris Car  
Finance and  
Administration  
Manager



Kelly Gardiner  
Communications  
Manager



Aaron Wicks  
Assistant Facility  
Manager  
ArtsHub Ortona



Raj Nigam  
General Manager  
ArtsHub Ortona



Brent Constantine  
Cultural Planner

